

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Galena Public Meeting Notes
November 10, 2010**

Open House	6:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.
Presentation	6:30 P.M. – 7:10 P.M.
Question & Comments	7:10 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak

Attendance

35 attendees recorded on the sign-in sheet (not including those from the project team).

Presentation

Alexa Greene, AK DOT&PF, opened the meeting, welcomed those in attendance, introduced the project team representatives, and introduced the purpose of the public meeting.

Tom Middendorf, DOWL HKM, presented an overview of the Corridor Planning Report.

Questions & Comments

Q = Question R = Response C = Comment

Q: Between 2000-02 a plan was proposed that went from Manley to Unalakleet via Tanana, Ruby, Galena, Nulato, Kaltag, and Stebbins. Why are we going away from this?

R: Our primary objective was to identify the most beneficial and cost-effective route from Fairbanks to Nome. We are also planning spur roads to communities that want them, but we have not mapped the spur roads. Unalakleet could be considered a pretty long spur road, but we will identify longer connecting links, such as the road to Unalakleet, as a possible future connector, in our report.

Q: Are only gold mines being considered?

R: The report showed all of the mines to be potentially be accessed. It included many different minerals, not just gold.

Q: Will this project be getting on the National Transportation Plan in mid-2011?

R: That will be up to DOT&PF.

C: In order to get federal funding it has to get on that plan.

R: Federal sources will be further defined later if it is determined the project should move ahead.

Q: Has an option for a railroad been studied or compared at all?

R: To some extent, yes. A railroad must be straighter and have a much lower grade; as a result it will also be longer than the road. Additionally, the cost per mile to both build and maintain a railroad is approximately four times the cost to build and maintain a road. Because of this we felt it wasn't necessary to continue looking at the rail option. If a road does go in first, it would reduce the cost to install a railroad.

C: Gold mining is terribly destructive to the environment and is only a temporary resource. It is the worst economy in this area that we could possibly have.

C: The road has to connect to as many villages as possible as it would substantially lower the cost of living.

Q: What would the road look like?

R: Our plan currently proposes a road that is 30 feet wide, a 6-foot deep typical section with 8 inches of surface course material at the top and underlain by a supporting geotextile. The side slopes would be 4 to 1.

Q: Does the project cost include the cost to construct the spur roads?

R: No it is not included, but we have estimated this cost in the report. We have assumed that all communities would have access roads unless they elect not to.

C: The caribou herd is very large and needs to be thinned. Having road access farther to the west would allow for hunters to access the herd and thin it.

Q: There has been some discussion of a road between Unalakleet and Kaltag; is Unalakleet in favor of this?

R: Yes.

C: The road would make freight accessibility much better.

C: We'd like to see a road from Galena to McGrath through Ruby.

C: It would be better to access Tanana via Nenana and not Manley.

C: I don't see how villages can continue to afford heating oil with the current economy and rising oil costs. This road will substantially lower heating costs in the villages.

Q: What is the cost per mile of the road?

R: We broke up the cost per mile into costs over flat lands, rolling terrain, and mountainous terrain in order to be able to provide a better estimate, than just by cost per generic mile. The cost over flat terrain is \$2.2 million/mile; rolling terrain, \$3.1 million/mile, and mountainous terrain \$4.7 million/mile.

C: What about the cost to construct the project in 20 years?

R: *We have not estimated future costs, but they would likely be higher.*

C: The biggest negative about the project is that it will take 20 years to build it.

C: Maintenance stations at 50-mile intervals would be great! Along the Dalton Highway they are closer to 100-miles apart.